

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, GW

SUBJECT: GERMAN MEDIA REACTIOH TO INDOCHINESE
DEVELOPMENTS

BEGIN SUMMARY: WEST GERMAN MEDIA
REACTION TO THE EVOLVING SITUATION IN INDOCHINA HAS
BEEN FOR THE MOST PART SOBER AND RESTRAINED.
THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT FOR GERMAN COMMENTATORS
HAS BEEN THE PARALLEL--OR LACK THEREOF--BETWEEN WHAT
HAPPENED IN INDOCHINA AND WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN EUROPE.
MOST COMMENTATORS TOOK PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE
U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM INDOCHINA AND CONGRESS'S
UNWILLINGNESS TO VOTE ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID TO THE
REGION DO NOT PRESAGE A U.S. ABANDONMENT OF EUROPE.
HOWEVER, THE MERE FACT THAT SO MANY COMMENTATORS FELT IT
NECESSARY TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE PROBABLY REFLECTS
WIDESPREAD UNEASINESS.

REASSURING STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT, THE SECRETARY
AND OTHER AMERICAN LEADERS RECEIVED A GOOD PLAY. HEAVY
MEDIA COVERAGE TODAY (APRIL 30) WAS DIRECTED
TOWARDS THE FACT OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S CAPITULATION AND AN
INTERPRETATION OF WHAT THAT CAPITULATION MEANS FOR
AMERICA. IT CONCENTRATED ON THE FAILURE OF AMERICAN
POLICY IN VIETNAM AND ON THE

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SACRIFICE OF AMERICAN LIVES AND MONEY. END SUMMARY

1. DIE WELT (RIGHT-CENTER) BY HERBERT KREMP: "UGLINESS AT THE END" "...IT IS CLEAR WHAT WILL BECOME OF INDO-CHINA. WHAT IS NOT SO CLEAR, HOWEVER, IS WHAT CONSEQUENCES THE AMERICANS WILL DRAW. THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN WAR HAS DEEPLY INFLUENCED THE DOMESTIC POLICY OF THE WESTERN POWER. AMERICA HAS SUFFERED ITS MOST SEVERE DEFEAT SINCE ITS CIVIL WAR....THE WAR IN VIETNAM IS A LESSON. THE COMMUNISTS TOOK TO HEART THAT THERE IS NO REPLACEMENT FOR VICTORY, WHILE THE AMERICANS PAID NO HEED TO THIS...WASHINGTON SOUGHT TO SAVE ITS HONOR BEYOND THE END OF THE WAR; THE ENEMY DID NOT PLAY THE GAME....THUS THE END IS UGLY."

2. NEUE RHEIN ZEITUNG (PRO-SPD), BY JENS FEDDERSEN: "...ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO AMERICA HAD DRAWN THE FINAL LINE UNDER THE VIETNAM CHAPTER. THE PARIS AGREEMENT, SIGNED BY KISSINGER, WAS NOTHING BUT AN ALIBI FOR U.S. WITHDRAWAL. FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT THE COMMUNISTS USED THE OPPORTUNITY THAT THIS AGREEMENT OFFERED. TO THEM IT WAS AN ORDER FOR CONQUEST. AT NO TIME HAVE THEY THOUGHT OF REBUILDING THEIR OWN COUNTRY. THEIR OBJECTIVE WAS TO WEAR DOWN SOUTH VIETNAM. WHILE MOSCOW SUPPLIED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WITH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION, THE WESTERN WORLD LOOKED ON AS IF IT WERE NO LONGER CONCERNED..."

3. SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG (INDEPENDENT-LIBERAL) BY JOSEF RIEDMILLER. "...SOUTH VIETNAM'S COLLAPSE IS ALSO AN AMERICAN DEFEAT AND A MILITARY ONE AT THAT. NOTHING WILL EXPLAIN THAT AWAY. BUT IN THEIR FIRST DEFEAT THE AMERICANS DID NOT CUT A GOOD FIGURE. DID THEY REALLY HAVE TO RUN THE RISK OF HAVING PRESIDENT MINH, THEIR FORMER ALLY, ASK THEM TO LEAVE SAIGON? AND DID IT TAKE THE BOMBARDMENT OF THE SAIGON AIRBASE TO REMIND THEM THAT THE LAST PLANE WOULD BE LEAVING WITHIN A FEW HOURS? THE FLIGHT OF THE AMERICANS FROM SAIGON WAS SHAMEFUL AND REQUIRED SACRIFICES WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED BY AN EARLIER EVACUATION."

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4. RHEINISCHE POST (PRO-CDU), BY CLAUS-DIETRICH MOEHRKE: "...THE U.S. HAS LOST 56,000 HUMAN LIVES, MANY MORE WOUNDED AND SACRIFICED MORE THAN 150 BILLION DOLLARS. DOESN'T THAT COUNT ANY LONGER TODAY? IS WHAT REMAINS ONLY THE SHAME OF HAVING BEEN OUSTED AND THE RANCOROUS ECHO THAT THE UNHEROIC END OF THE VIETNAMESE DRAMA WILL CALL FORTH IN MANY PLACES? DOES THERE REMAIN A WORLD POWER SO DEEPLY HURT BY ITS FIRST DEFEAT THAT

IT HAS LOST ITS OPTIMISM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE? THAT
WOULD BE BAD--WORSE EVEN THAN THE END IN VIETNAM. MUCH
REMAINS TO BE CLARIFIED... AMERICA HAS TO OVERCOME ITS
VIETNAMESE PAST. BUT WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT IS THAT

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AMERICA SHAKES OFF ITS PARALYSIS AND REMEMBERS ITS
RESPONSIBILITIES. THEY NO LONGER LIE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA."

5. RHEINISCHER MERKUR (PRO-CDU), BY FRIEDRICH GRAF VON
WESTPHALEN. "WASHINGTON'S DOCTRINES ARE NOT HELPFUL:
VIETNAM-SYNDROME AND WATERGATE PARALYZE AMERICAN FOREIGN
POLICY. MORE IMPRESSIVELY THAN AT ANY TIME BEFORE HAS
IT BEEN CONFIRMED IN WASHINGTON THESE DAYS: BASICALLY,
WASHINGTON HARDLY PURSUES A FOREIGN POLICY. DOMESTIC
POLICY PERSPECTIVES ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY. IN
ADDITION, THE EVENTS IN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM
HAVE MADE IT MORE THAN DOUBTFUL WHETHER AMERICA IS
WILLING TO CONDUCT A FOREIGN POLICY AT ALL...TO SHOULDER
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONTINUATION OF INDIVISIBLE
FREEDOM....THE EVENTS DURING THE PAST WEEKS HAVE PROVED
THE FAILURE OF THE NIXON DOCTRINE IN A TRAGIC WAY. THIS
IS NOT ONLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT DOCTRINES ARE NOT

SUITED FOR THE PURSUIT OF FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS....
JUST AS IMPORTANT IS IT TO REALIZE THE EXTENT TO WHICH
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IS DEPENDENT ON CONGRESS. IN
OTHER WORDS, HOW LITTLE THE PRESIDENT MAY DO WITHOUT OR
AGAINST CONGRESS...."

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6. FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU (LEFT-CENTER): "...AS IN
PHNOM PENH, THE LAST AMERICANS HASTILY LEAVE THE
COUNTRY. THEIR WAR IN INDOCHINA HAD COME TO AN END
LONG BEFORE, HOWEVER, IT ENDED ON THE DAY WHEN RICHARD
NIXON, ADVISED BY HENRY KISSINGER, ANNOUNCED THE WITH-
DRAWAL OF ALL AMERICAN TROOPS AND PROCLAIMED THE
'VIETNAMIZATION' OF THE WAR. AT THAT TIME KISSINGER
REALIZED THAT ALL THAT MATTERED WAS TO FIND A WAY OUT
OF THE CONFLICT FOR THE U.S., EVEN IF IT WAS AN
UNRELIABLE ONE. AT THAT TIME HE WAS RIGHT. WHY HE
DOES NOT WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS
POLICY TODAY REMAINS A MYSTERY...."

7. GENERAL-ANZEIGER (BN, INDEPENDENT) UNDER THE
FRONTPAGE HEADLINE. "A NEW CHAPTER: EXCEPT FOR A FEW
STRAY BULLETS, THE GUNS ARE SILENT IN VIETNAM. THE
LAST AMERICANS HAVE DEPARTED THE SCENE OF THE WAR THAT
HAS COST THEM 55,000 LIVES--SACRIFICES FOR WHOM?
SACRIFICES FOR WHAT?...PRESIDENT FORD HAS ASKED
AMERICANS TO OPEN A NEW CHAPTER IN THEIR POSTWAR
HISTORY. THE BURDEN OF THE WAR CAN BE LAID ASIDE, THE
ENERGY CAN BE APPLIED TO NEW GOALS, SUCH AS THE BATTLE
AGAINST INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. IN ASIA, WASHINGTON
IS DRAWING NEW AND DRASTICALLY ABBREVIATED LINES OF
RESISTENCE AGAINST THE RED TIDE, BUT NO ONE KNOWS
NOW HOW DURABLE THE 'UP TO HERE AND NO FURTHER' WILL
BE. EVERY AMERICAN PRESIDENT WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN
PUMPING BLOOD, DOLLARS AND WEAPONS INTO AREAS OUTSIDE
'FORTRESS AMERICA.' SOUTH VIETNAM WAS STRUCK A BAD
BLOW MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO WITH A TRUCE, THE
DECEPTIVE PARIS AGREEMENT. IT PERMITTED COMMUNIST
BASES IN THE COUNTRY IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ENCOURAGE
THE COMMUNISTS TO TAKE OVER THE REST OF THE COUNTRY
AS WELL."

8. APRIL 29 TV NEWS COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL STOFFREGEN-
MUELLER OF THE HESSISCHER RUNDFUNK: "SIX DAYS AGO,
PRESIDENT FORD HAD DECLARED THE VIETNAM WAR FINISHED IN
AN ADDRESS TO AMERICAN STUDENTS. NOW THAT THE LAST
AMERICANS HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY (VIETNAM), SAIGON AND

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THE PRG SEEM TO BE AGREEING TO A CEASE-FIRE WHOSE
CONDITIONS ARE UNKNOWN UP TO NOW. THE OLD PRINCIPAL
DEMAND OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT IS FULFILLED:
AFTER TWENTY YEARS THERE WILL BE A VIETNAM WITHOUT
THE AMERICANS. THIS IS THE FINAL END OF THE UNWANTED
ENTANGLEMENT, OF THE ERROR AND ARROGANCE. WHAT IS LEFT
IS A SCORCHED COUNTRY, A CAPITAL THAT THE VICTORS
HESITATE TO CAPTURE AND IN WHICH A GOVERNMENT STILL
ATTEMPTS TO MAKE POLICY - A GOVERNMENT THAT IS AT BEST
FITTED TO NEGOTIATE THE CAPITULATION. IT IS IMPORTANT
THAT WE REALIZE NOW THAT A SO-CALLED
POLITICAL SOLUTION WAS NO LONGER WITHIN REACH IN
VIETNAM. EVEN WITHOUT AMERICA'S WITHDRAWAL AND THE
END OF MILITARY AID THE THIEU REGIME WHICH WAS
ROTTEN IN ITS CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT WOULD HAVE
COLLAPSED. MOST OF ALL IT IS NECESSARY THAT THE
VIETNAM DISASTER BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS A DEFEAT BY THE

RESPONSIBLE POLITICIANS IN WASHINGTON IN THE LONG RUN,
REPRESSING AND COVERING UP THIS FACT WOULD BE A
DOMESTIC BURDEN. AS PRESIDENT FORD SAID, AMERICA MUST
REGAIN THAT FEELING OF SELF-CONFIDENCE THAT WAS THERE
BEFORE THE WAR IN VIETNAM. BUT BEFORE THAT IT MUST
REALIZE THAT THE MISSIONARY CONCEPTS OF THE FREE WORLD
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AND THE DELUSION OF WESTERN TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY
WERE A MISTAKE. BOTH AMERICA AND ESPECIALLY VIETNAM
NEED HELP. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SNEAK AWAY AT THE
END OF THE WAR. WE, THE SPECTATORS OF THIS TRAGEDY
ARE NOW CALLED UPON FOR HELP."
HILLENBRAND

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